

WASHINGTON – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) announced today that the Prince George's County Fire/Emergency Medical Services Department has been awarded a federal Fire Grant in the amount of \$20,403. As co-chair of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus, Congressman Hoyer was very active in helping establish and fund the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, which helps local fire departments in Maryland and across the country buy equipment and provide adequate training.

Additionally, the United States Fire Administration (USFA) has announced that May 1 – 7, 2005 is Arson Awareness Week to create a national recognition, awareness and understanding of the arson problem in the United States and to encourage communities to get involved in the dissemination of arson awareness information. More information about Arson Awareness week is available at [the U.S. Fire Administrator Website](#) .

“For more than two years, our region has been terrorized by a serial arsonist who has struck nearly 50 times and brought a great deal of unease to our communities,” said Congressman Hoyer. “In the summer of 2003, Prince George’s County and the District of Columbia resourcefully coordinated the efforts of both jurisdictions to pursue the person(s) responsible for the series of arsons in the region. With the help of this federal funding, I am hopeful that Prince George’s County will have the additional resources they need to help progress their investigation.

“I am a strong supporter of the Fire Grant program because it helps fire departments purchase equipment that will better protect their firefighters, and keep their departments running safely and efficiently. Our volunteer and career firefighters sacrifice a great deal to protect our communities and it is our duty to provide them with all available resources they need to protect our neighborhoods from harm and to ensure that they are able to safely perform their job,” added Hoyer.

The Prince George’s County Fire/Emergency Medical Services Department was awarded a federal Fire Grant in the amount of \$20,403 under the program of Fire Prevention. The grant will be used to purchase equipment and supplies to stock an Arson Investigation Unit. This mobile crime lab will provide critical investigative tools to the arson experts and investigators at the scene of an incident to rapidly assist with the investigation.

Prince George’s County Fire Chief Lawrence H. Sedgwick, Jr. stated, “I am pleased that the Prince George’s County Fire/Emergency Medical Services Department has been awarded a

federal Fire Grant through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. With the help of this federal funding, the Fire/EMS Department will equip and supply a Mobile Arson Investigation Unit. Our Fire Investigators' ability to solve crimes of Arson will certainly be enhanced with the addition of this equipment. This funding ultimately allows the Fire/EMS Department to provide the best possible service to the citizens and residents of Prince George's County."

Congressman Hoyer helped start the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program because fire departments often have difficulty purchasing proper equipment. A ladder truck for a local fire department can run upwards of \$750,000 and outfitting one firefighter with turnout gear and breathing apparatus can approach \$4,500. In addition, departments must fund training programs for paid and/or volunteer firefighters.

The program funding can be used for the following: turnout gear; breathing apparatus; communications equipment; wellness and fitness programs; computer and technology improvements for record keeping and training purposes; training in fire-fighting, emergency response and arson prevention; improving the enforcement of fire codes; and modifying fire stations and fire training facilities to protect the health and safety of the firefighter personnel.

President Bush's budget blueprint for fiscal year 2002 eliminated funding for the Firefighter program, contending that the fire grant program "does not represent an appropriate responsibility of the federal government." Congressman Hoyer and other members of Congress have historically fought to restore funding to the program, and secured \$650 million in fiscal year 2005, \$150 million more than the President's request for 2005. However, the President's budget for fiscal year 2006 proposed another \$150 million decrease in funds for the program and Congressman Hoyer will fight to restore these funds.

The President's budget also eliminates funding for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Firefighters (SAFER) Grant Program. Last year, Congressman Hoyer was successful in securing \$65 million in funding for the SAFER Program in the Homeland Security funding bill and he will continue to be a leader in fighting for funding for this program. Funding for this historic new federal grant program will help career and volunteer fire departments hire new firefighters, recruit and retain volunteer fire fighters, and provide relief to the thousands of local fire stations across the country that are currently operating short of staff.

Earlier this month, a group of 120 U.S. Representatives, led by Congressman Hoyer, sent a

letter to the Chairman and Ranking member of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee urging them to include funding in the FY 2006 Homeland Security Appropriations bill for fire fighter staffing.

Since 2001, Maryland has received nearly \$22 million in grant funding from the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. Fire departments that have received grants in Maryland's Fifth District include La Plata, Hughesville, Mechanicsville, Solomons, Laurel, Prince George's County, Seventh District, Leonardtown, College Park, Cobb Island, Second District, Brandywine, Greenbelt, Benedict, Waldorf, Newburg, Prince Frederick, Potomac Heights, Bryans Road, and Berwyn Heights.

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